THE HUMAN FLY™
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THE WILDEST SUPER-HERO EVER--BECAUSE HE'S REAL!
THE HUMAN FLY™
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IT'S DARK AS A DUNGEON DOWN IN THE MINE!

One night in 1971, on a lonely North Carolina highway, a head-on *car crash* cost a young driver his family—and, very nearly, his *life!* Hardly a bone in his body remained *unbroken*. His doctors were *sure* that he would never *move* again... But he *triumphed* over his disability and went on to become the *wildest hero* of all—because he's *REAL!*

STAN LEE PRESENTS: THE HUMAN FLY!™

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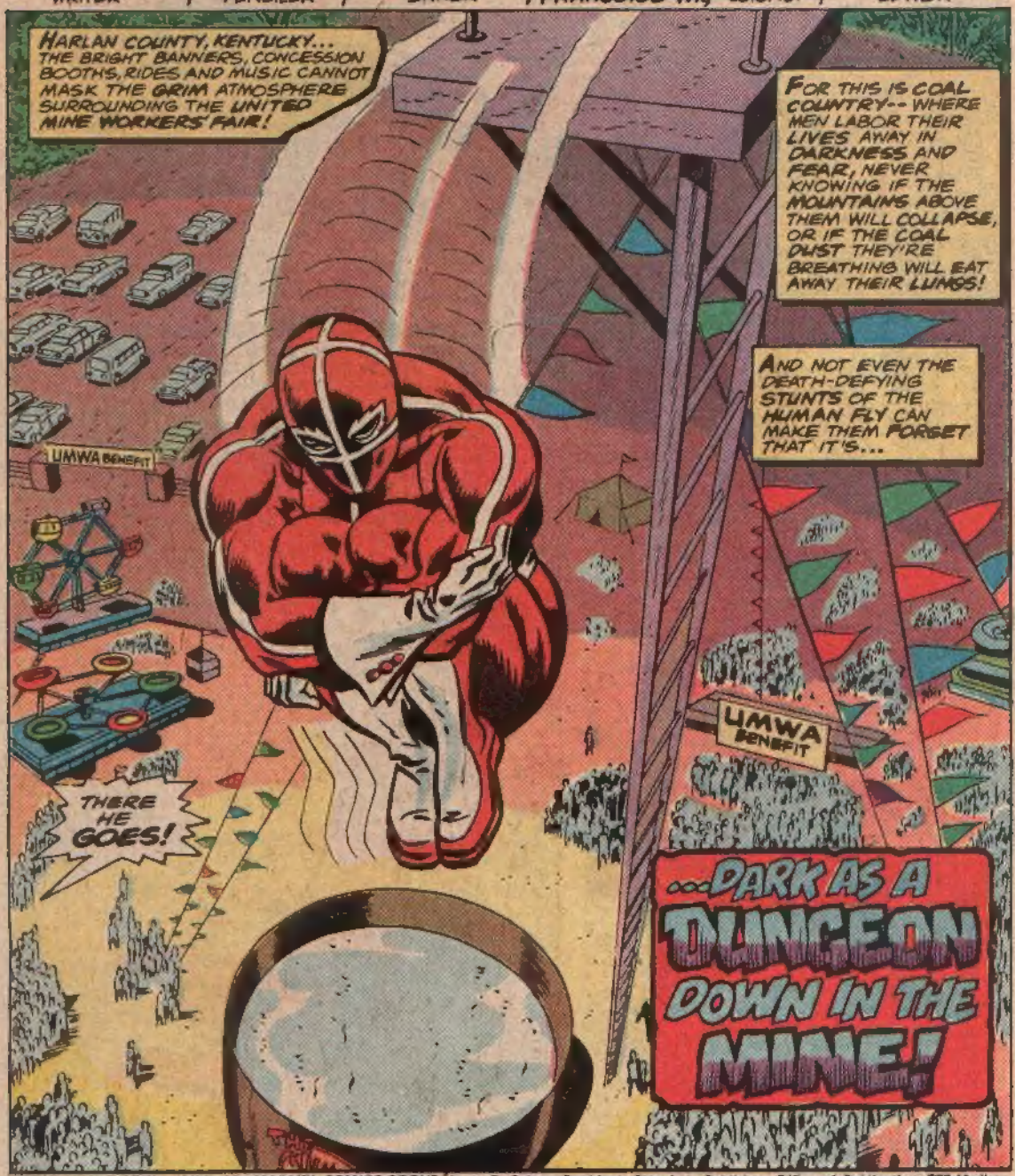
HARLAN COUNTY, KENTUCKY... THE BRIGHT BANNERS, CONCESSION BOOTHS, RIDES AND MUSIC CANNOT MASK THE GRIM ATMOSPHERE SURROUNDING THE UNITED MINE WORKERS' FAIR!
FOR THIS IS COAL COUNTRY-- WHERE MEN LABOR THEIR LIVES AWAY IN DARKNESS AND FEAR, NEVER KNOWING IF THE MOUNTAINS ABOVE THEM WILL COLLAPSE, OR IF THE COAL DUST THEY'RE BREATHING WILL EAT AWAY THEIR LUNGS!
AND NOT EVEN THE DEATH-DEFYING STUNTS OF THE HUMAN FLY CAN MAKE THEM FORGET THAT IT'S...
UMWA BENEFIT
UMWA BENEFIT
THERE HE GOES!
...DARK AS A DUNGEON DOWN IN THE MINE!

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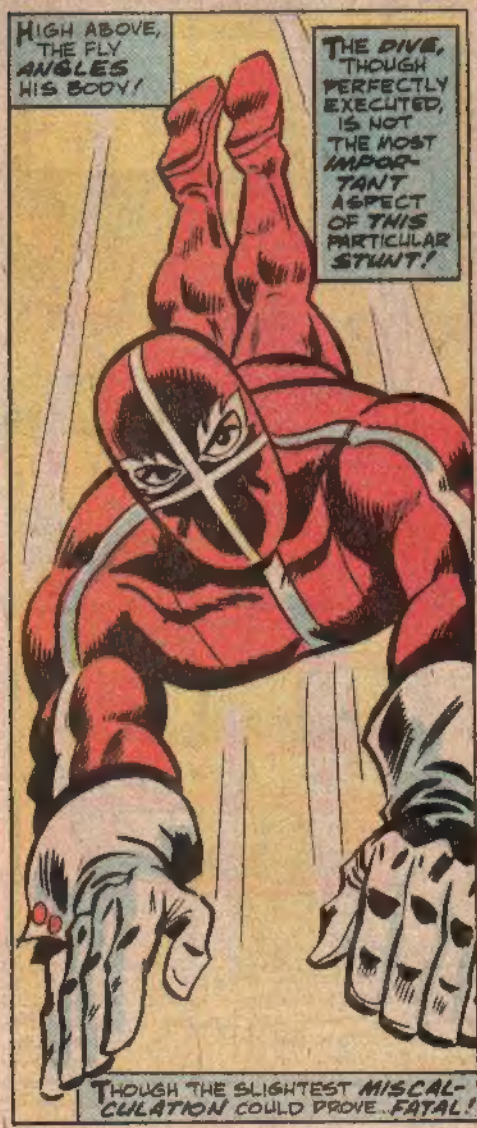
YOU CALL THAT A STUNT?
UMWA BENEFIT
UNITED MINE WORKERS OF AMERICA
HECK, I ONCE SAW A GUY DO THE SAME THING ON THE ED SULLIVAN SHOW-- INTO A GLASS O' WATER!
WHAT HAPPENED TO HIM?
HE BROKE HIS DANGED FOOL NECK IS WHAT HAPPENED!
THESE FELLOWS ARE IN FOR A SURPRISE, EH, ARNIE?
LET'S HOPE SO, TED!

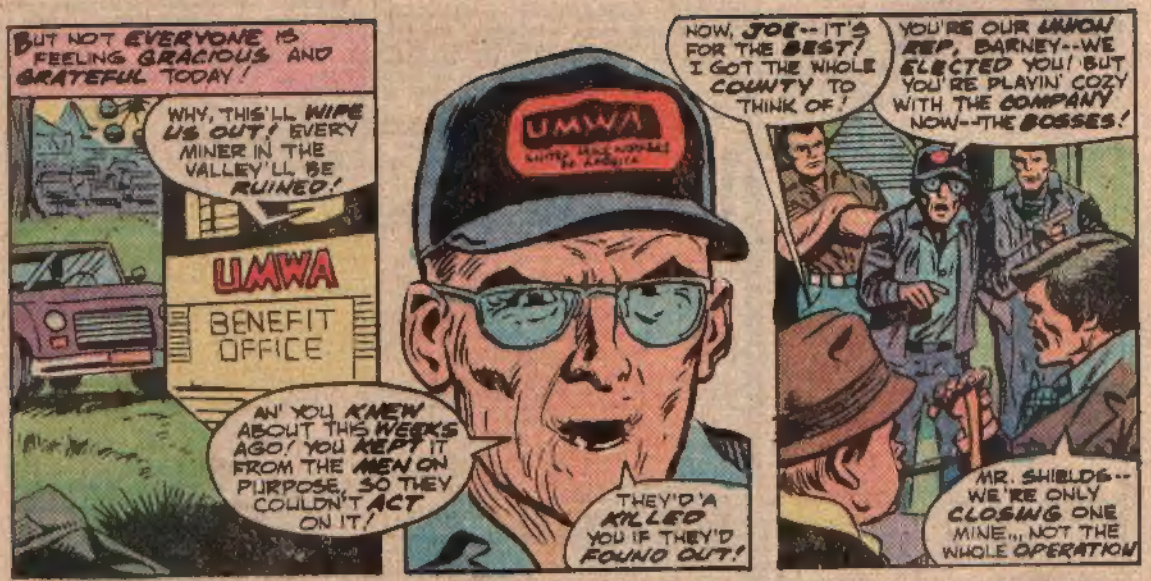

HIGH ABOVE, THE FLY ANGLES HIS BODY!
THE DIVE, THOUGH PERFECTLY EXECUTED, IS NOT THE MOST IMPORTANT ASPECT OF THIS PARTICULAR STUNT!
THOUGH THE SLIGHTEST MISCALCULATION COULD PROVE FATAL!

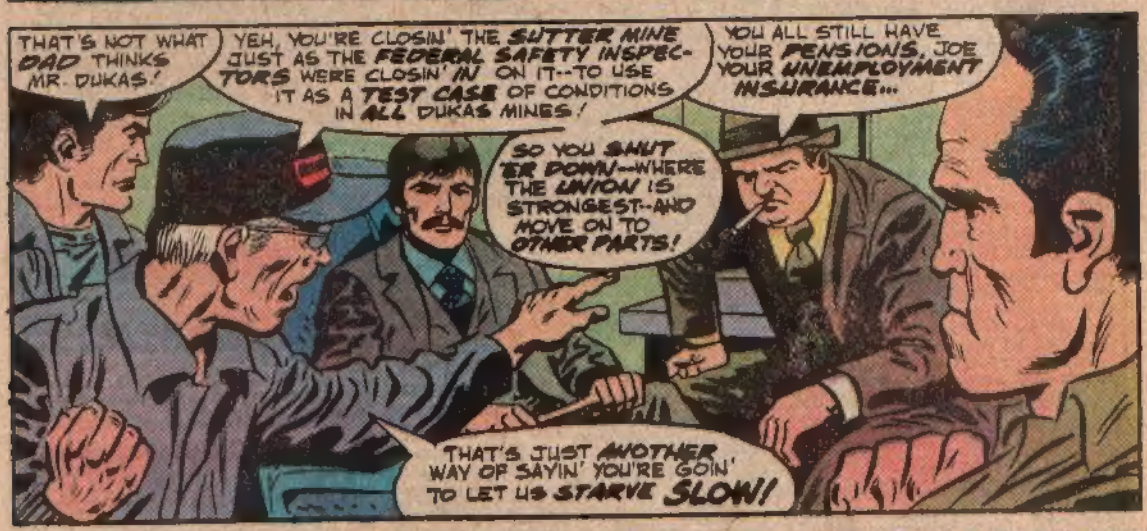
THE TRUE TEST OF THE FLY'S SKILL COMES...NOW! KNIFING INTO THE WATER-FILLED TANK-- PIVOTING, WITHOUT SLOWING HIS DOWNWARD MOMENTUM--
SPLOOSH!
--THE FLY STRIKES THE BASE OF THE TANK WITH BONE-JARRING FORCE!
BENEATH THE TANK'S BASE-- A POWERFUL SPRING COILS TIGHTLY!

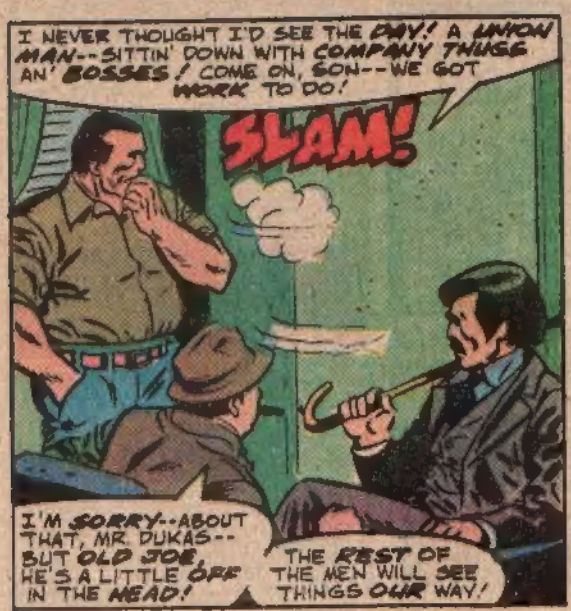
BUT ALL THAT GOES UNSEEN BY THE SPECTATORS, WHO BEGIN TO TURN AWAY!
WELL, THAT'S THAT! SOME BUILD-UP-- AN' ALL HE DOES IS MAKE A BIG SPLASH!
AW, WHAT THE HECK! TAKES YOUR MIND OFF WORKIN'!
LET'S SEE THE REST OF THIS HERE AWAIR, ROY!
RIGHT WITH YOU, HARRY...!
SHOOSH!
H-HUH??
I--I DON'T BELIEVE IT!
THAT THERE FELLER'S SHOOTIN' UP OUTTA THAT TANK LIKE A HUMAN ROCKET!
YES-- BECAUSE HE ANGLED HIS DIVE JUST RIGHT!
AND BECAUSE THE SPRING-LAUNCHER DEVISED BY TED LOCKE WORKED TO PERFECTION!
AND BECAUSE HE IS...THE HUMAN FLY!

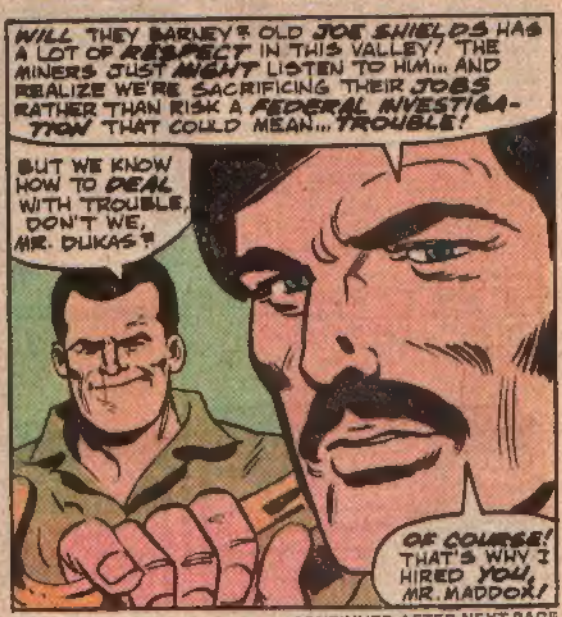
CONTINUED AFTER NEXT PAGE

THE REST IS CHILD'S PLAY--
--FOR ONE WHO HAS TRAINED HIS BROKEN AND CRIPPLED BODY--
--TURNING IT INTO A FINELY-TUNED PRECISION INSTRUMENT--
--FOR ONE PURPOSE AND ONE AMBITION ONLY!
THAT OF BRINGING HOPE AND DREAMS-- TO MILLIONS OF PEOPLE EVERYWHERE!
IT IS AN AMBITION ATTAINED TIME AND TIME AGAIN BY HE WHO IS CALLED...THE HUMAN FLY!
UMWA
WELL, ROY--WHAT DO YOU SAY NOW?
YOUR FRIEND'S JUST WON HISSELF A BELIEVER! AN' MORE'N THAT--
UMWA
AMEN TO THAT!
--I DO BELIEVE THAT STUNT OF HIS IS GOIN' TO BRING IN MORE CONTRIBUTIONS TO THIS UNION FUNDRAISER THAN WE'D HOPED! WE GOTTA THANK YOU FOLKS-TRULY!
UNIT


BUT NOT EVERYONE IS FEELING GRACIOUS AND GRATEFUL TODAY!
WHY, THIS'LL WIPE US OUT! EVERY MINER IN THE VALLEY'LL BE RUINED!
UMWA
BENEFIT OFFICE
AN' YOU KNEW ABOUT THIS WEEKS AGO! YOU KEPT IT FROM THE MEN ON PURPOSE, SO THEY COULDN'T ACT ON IT!
UMWA
THEY'D'A KILLED YOU IF THEY'D FOUND OUT!
NOW, JOE--IT'S FOR THE BEST! I GOT THE WHOLE COUNTY TO THINK OF!
YOU'RE OUR UNION REP, BARNEY--WE ELECTED YOU! BUT YOU'RE PLAYIN' COZY WITH THE COMPANY NOW--THE BOSSES!
MR. SHIELDS--WE'RE ONLY CLOSING ONE MINE... NOT THE WHOLE OPERATION

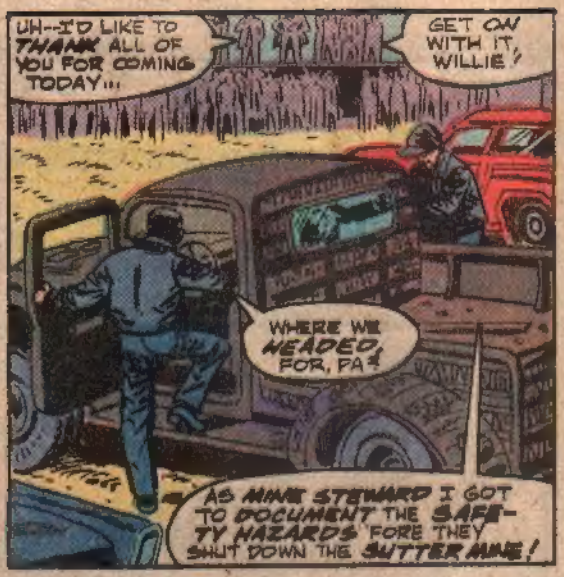

THAT'S NOT WHAT DAD THINKS MR. DUKAS!
YEH, YOU'RE CLOSIN' THE SUTTER MINE JUST AS THE FEDERAL SAFETY INSPECTORS WERE CLOSIN' IN ON IT--TO USE IT AS A TEST CASE OF CONDITIONS IN ALL DUKAS MINES!
SO YOU SHUT 'ER DOWN--WHERE THE UNION IS STRONGEST--AND MOVE ON TO OTHER PARTS!
YOU ALL STILL HAVE YOUR PENSIONS, JOE YOUR UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE...
THAT'S JUST ANOTHER WAY OF SAYIN' YOU'RE GOIN' TO LET US STARVE SLOW!


I NEVER THOUGHT I'D SEE THE DAY! A UNION MAN--SITTIN' DOWN WITH COMPANY THUGS AN' BOSSES! COME ON, SON--WE GOT WORK TO DO!
SLAM!
I'M SORRY--ABOUT THAT, MR. DUKAS--BUT OLD JOE, HE'S A LITTLE OFF IN THE HEAD!
THE REST OF THE MEN WILL SEE THINGS OUR WAY!


WILL THEY BARNEY? OLD JOE SHIELDS HAS A LOT OF RESPECT IN THIS VALLEY! THE MINERS JUST MIGHT LISTEN TO HIM... AND REALIZE WE'RE SACRIFICING THEIR JOBS RATHER THAN RISK A FEDERAL INVESTIGATION THAT COULD MEAN... TROUBLE!
BUT WE KNOW HOW TO DEAL WITH TROUBLE, DON'T WE, MR. DUKAS?
OF COURSE! THAT'S WHY I HIRED YOU, MR. MADDOX!

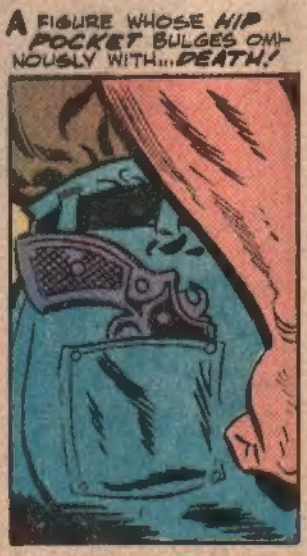
CONTINUED AFTER NEXT PAGE

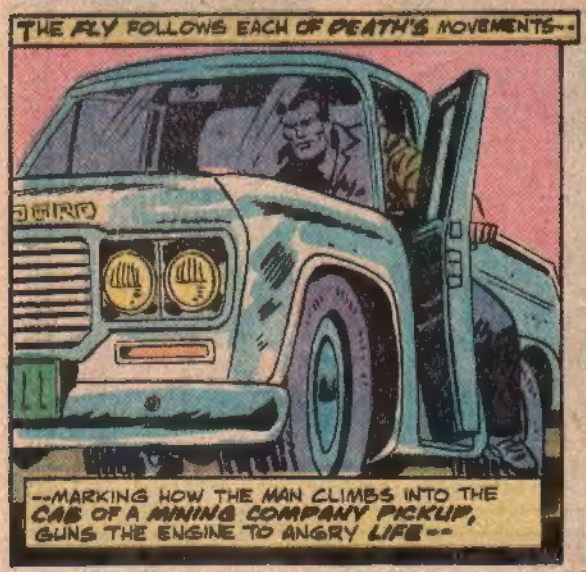
MEANWHILE, ON THE ANDSTAND...
LADIES AND GENTLEMEN--WELCOME THIS YEAR'S UMWA BENEFIT!
GO ON AN' INTRODUCE THE FLY, WILLIE! HE'S THE STAR!
SHOOT! GIVE THAT BOY A MICROPHONE AN' HE THINKS HE'S BILLY GRAHAM!
OR JOHN L. LEWIS!

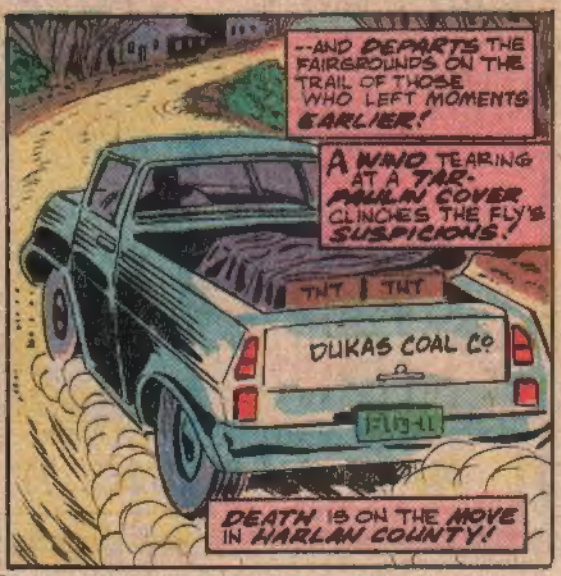

UH--I'D LIKE TO THANK ALL OF YOU FOR COMING TODAY...
GET ON WITH IT, WILLIE!
WHERE WE HEADED, FOR, PA?
AS MINE STEWARD I GOT TO DOCUMENT THE SAFETY HAZARDS 'FORE THEY SHUT DOWN THE SUTTER MINE!

FROM THE STAGE, THE FLY WATCHES OLD JOE AND JOE JUNIOR DEPART IN THEIR BATTERED PICKUP--
--AND HE NOTES SOMETHING MORE!

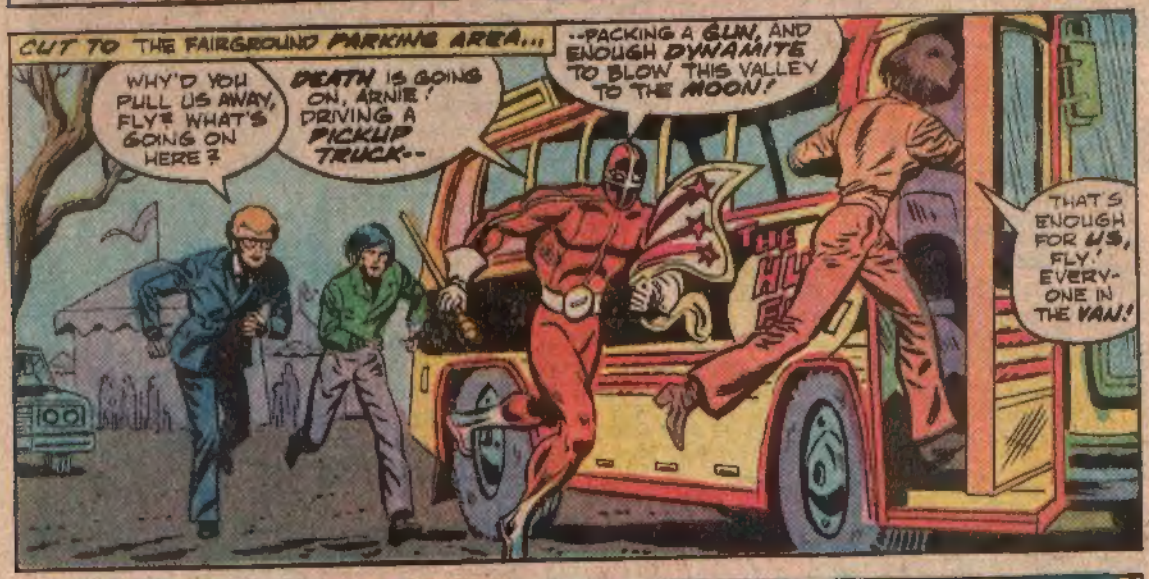
A FIGURE MOVING THROUGH THE CROWD WITH TIGHT-LIPPED DETERMINATION--
--IN A DIRECTION OPPOSITE TO THAT OF THE MINERS AND THEIR FAMILIES SURGING AROUND THE STAGE--


A FIGURE WHOSE HIP POCKET BULGES OMINOUSLY WITH...DEATH!


THE FLY FOLLOWS EACH OF DEATH'S MOVEMENTS--
--MARKING HOW THE MAN CLIMBS INTO THE CAB OF A MINING COMPANY PICKUP, GUNS THE ENGINE TO ANGRY LIFE--


--AND DEPARTS THE FAIRGROUNDS ON THE TRAIL OF THOSE WHO LEFT MOMENTS EARLIER!
A MIND TEARING AT A TAR-PAULIN COVER CLINCHES THE FLY'S SUSPICIONS!
TNT
TNT
DUKAS COAL Co
DEATH IS ON THE MOVE IN HARLAN COUNTY!

I'D LIKE TO PRESENT... HUH? WHERE'S THE FLY?!
GUESS HE GOT TIRED OF ALL YOUR JAWIN', WILLIE! HE WENT THATAWAY!
I RECKON YOU ALL'D BETTER DO SOME REAL FAST TALKIN' NOW!


CUT TO THE FAIRGROUND PARKING AREA...
WHY'D YOU PULL US AWAY, FLY? WHAT'S GOING ON HERE?
DEATH IS GOING ON, ARNIE! DRIVING A PICKUP TRUCK--
--PACKING A GUN, AND ENOUGH DYNAMITE TO BLOW THIS VALLEY TO THE MOON!
THAT'S ENOUGH FOR US, FLY! EVERY-ONE IN THE VAN!

HEAD OUT ON THE MAIN ROAD, BLAZE!
TOWARDS THE MINES? BUT THERE WON'T BE ANYONE WORKING TODAY!
CHECK! THEY'RE ALL AT THE BENEFIT!
WHERE WE SHOULD BE!

THERE'S AT LEAST THREE OTHER PEOPLE NOT AT THE BENEFIT, ARNIE!
AND ONE OF THEM IS HUNTING THE OTHER TWO!
TRUCK AHEAD, FLY! OUR KILLER?
YES, BLAZE! FOLLOW HIM-- BUT DON'T GET TOO CLOSE... YET!
THE HUMAN FLY

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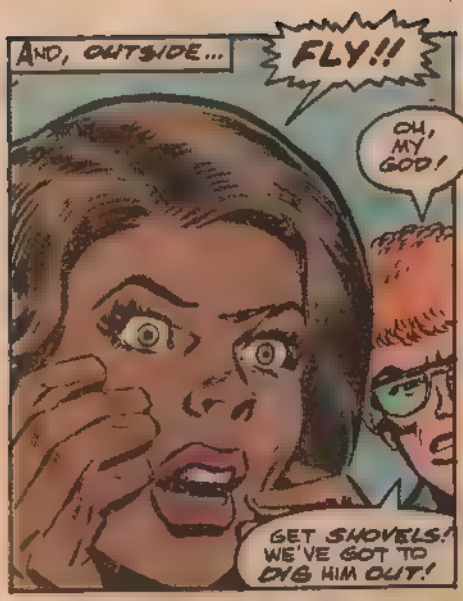
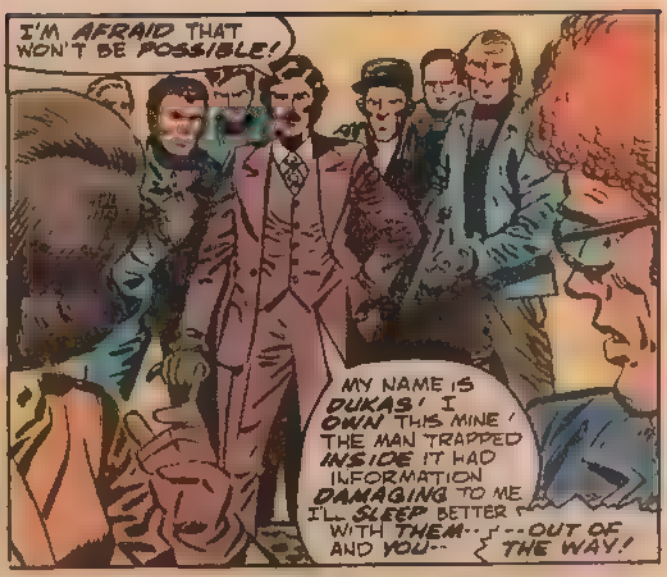
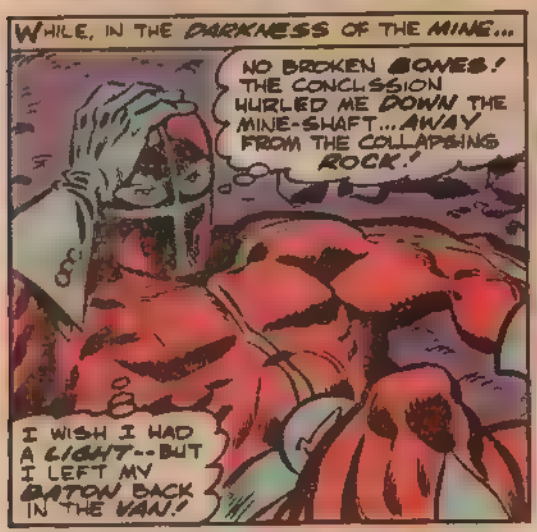
AND, A FEW MILES AHEAD...
WE'RE HERE, PA--SUTTER MINE!
PARK THE TRUCK AN' GET YOUR GEAR, SON! WE'RE GOIN' IN!
THIS OLD MINE AIN'T GONNA LIKE BEIN' DISTURBED ON HER DAY OFF--BUT IF WE DON'T FINISH OUR REPORT TODAY, THEY'LL SHUT 'ER DOWN--
--AN' NEVER LET US NEAR HER AGAIN!
WHAT IF THE REPORT DON'T GET DONE, PA?
THEN THE COMPANY PICKS UP AN' MOVES, SON--A RUNAWAY SHOP! ABANDONIN' THE MINE AN' THE WORKERS WHO GAVE THEIR LIVES TO IT--TO SET UP THE SAME CONDITIONS SOMEWHERE ELSE--
--WHERE THERE AIN'T NO UNION TO STOP 'EM!
THEY'RE TRYIN' IT ALL OVER THE COUNTRY, SON--OHIO, NORTH CAROLINA, CALIFORNIA!
IN STEEL, COAL, TEXTILE AN' IN THE FIELDS!
WE GOT TO CHANGE THEIR NOTION THAT THEY CAN CHEW UP OUR LIVES--
--AN' JUST WALK AWAY!
BEHIND THEM ...DEATH ARRIVES
THEY'VE GONE INTO THE MINE! THAT MAKES IT EASIER!
I CAN CLAIM I DIDN'T KNOW THEY WAS IN THERE--TRESPASSIN' ON PRIVATE PROPERTY--
--WHEN I GOT MY ORDERS TO SEAL UP THE MINE!
WELL, MADDOX--WHAT'RE YA WAITIN' FOR? A JOB'S A JOB!
AN' MR. DUKAS PAYS REAL, REAL GOOD!

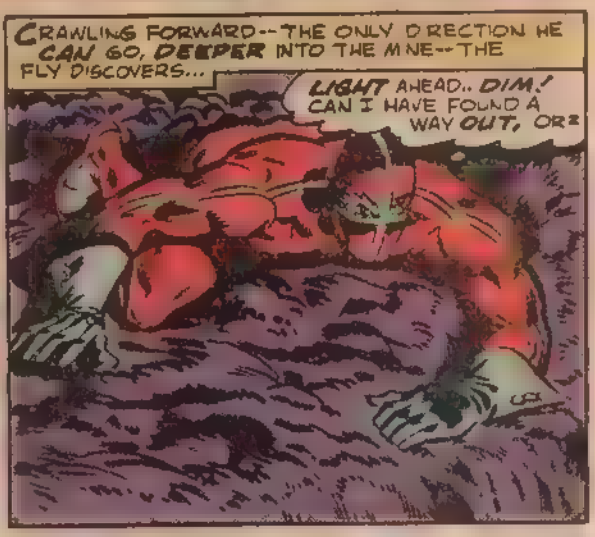
INSIDE THE MINE...
SOME OF THESE SHORINGS HAVEN'T BEEN REINFORCED IN YEARS, PA!
DOCU-MENT IT, SON! WRITE IT DOWN!
THAT'S THE ONLY WAY TO GET THE COMPANY!
WE COULD WRITE DOWN SAFETY CODE VIOLATIONS FROM NOW 'TIL DOOMSDAY BUT IT WON'T CHANGE ANYTHING!
IT'LL CHANGE THE MEN, SON --MAKE 'EM ANGRY--
"--AN' MILITANT! SO THAT THEY STAND UP AN' FIGHT BACK!"
WHILE OUTSIDE...
DYNAMITE'S IN PLACE, AN THE DETONATOR IS HOOKED UP! NOW TO...
TNT DANGER
HUH? A VAN COMIN'?!
GET YOUR HANDS OFF THAT DETONATOR, KILLER!
WHAT THE--?
SKREEE
GET HIM, TED! HOLD HIM!
WHILE I ALERT THE MEN INSIDE THE MINE!
THE FLY'S FIRST THOUGHT IS FOR THE SAFETY OF INNOCENTS--THE MEN WITHIN THE OLD MINE--
TNT
--AND IT IS TO THEIR AID THAT HE RUNS
SWOK!
BUT, PERHAPS, HAD HE STAYED BEHIND--

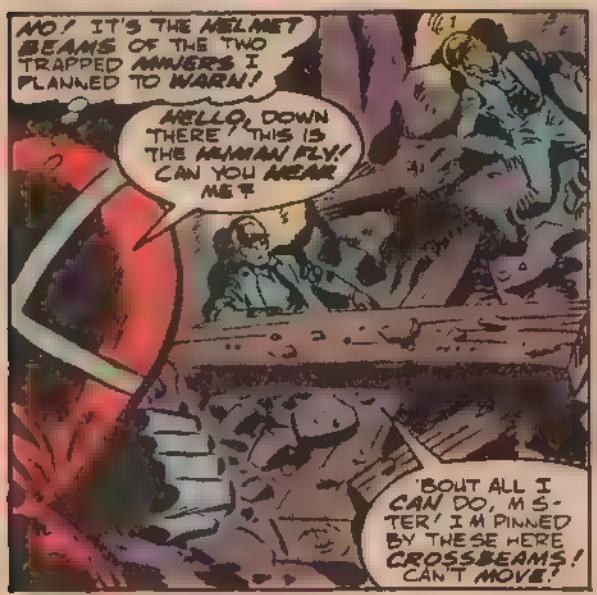
--TO HELP HIS EMBATTLED CREW HOLD BACK THE BULL-LIKE MADDOX--
HANDS OFF, CRIPPLE!
TED!
UNNHH!
--A TRAGEDY MIGHT WELL HAVE BEEN AVERTED!
KLIK
TED--THE DETONATOR! LOOK--
"--OUT!"
BUWHOOM!
WITH A MIGHTY GROAN, A SMALL MOUNTAIN HEAVES UP--
--AND FALLS BACK DOWN!
KROOM!
U-UNGHH!
THEN THERE IS DARKNESS, THE SLITHERING SOUND OF SETTLING DUST, FOLLOWED BY--
--THE SILENCE OF THE GRAVE!

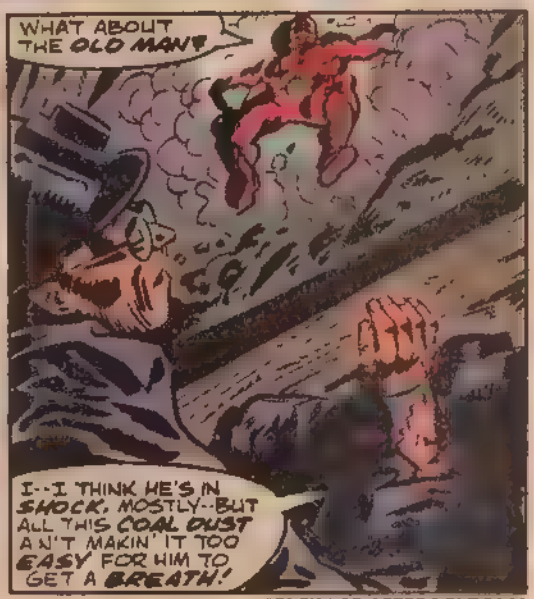



I'M AFRAID THAT WON'T BE POSSIBLE!
MY NAME IS DUKAS! I OWN THIS MINE! THE MAN TRAPPED INSIDE IT HAD INFORMATION DAMAGING TO ME. I'LL SLEEP BETTER WITH THEM--AND YOU--
--OUT OF THE WAY!


WHILE, IN THE DARKNESS OF THE MINE...
NO BROKEN BONES! THE CONCUSSION HURLED ME DOWN THE MINE-SHAFT...AWAY FROM THE COLLAPSING ROCK!
I WISH I HAD A LIGHT--BUT I LEFT MY BATON BACK IN THE VAN!


CRAWLING FORWARD--THE ONLY DIRECTION HE CAN GO, DEEPER INTO THE MINE--THE FLY DISCOVERS...
LIGHT AHEAD.. DIM! CAN I HAVE FOUND A WAY OUT, OR?


NO! IT'S THE HELMET BEAMS OF THE TWO TRAPPED MINERS I PLANNED TO WARN!
HELLO, DOWN THERE! THIS IS THE HUMAN FLY! CAN YOU HEAR ME?
'BOUT ALL I CAN DO, MISTER! I'M PINNED BY THESE HERE CROSSBEAMS! CAN'T MOVE!



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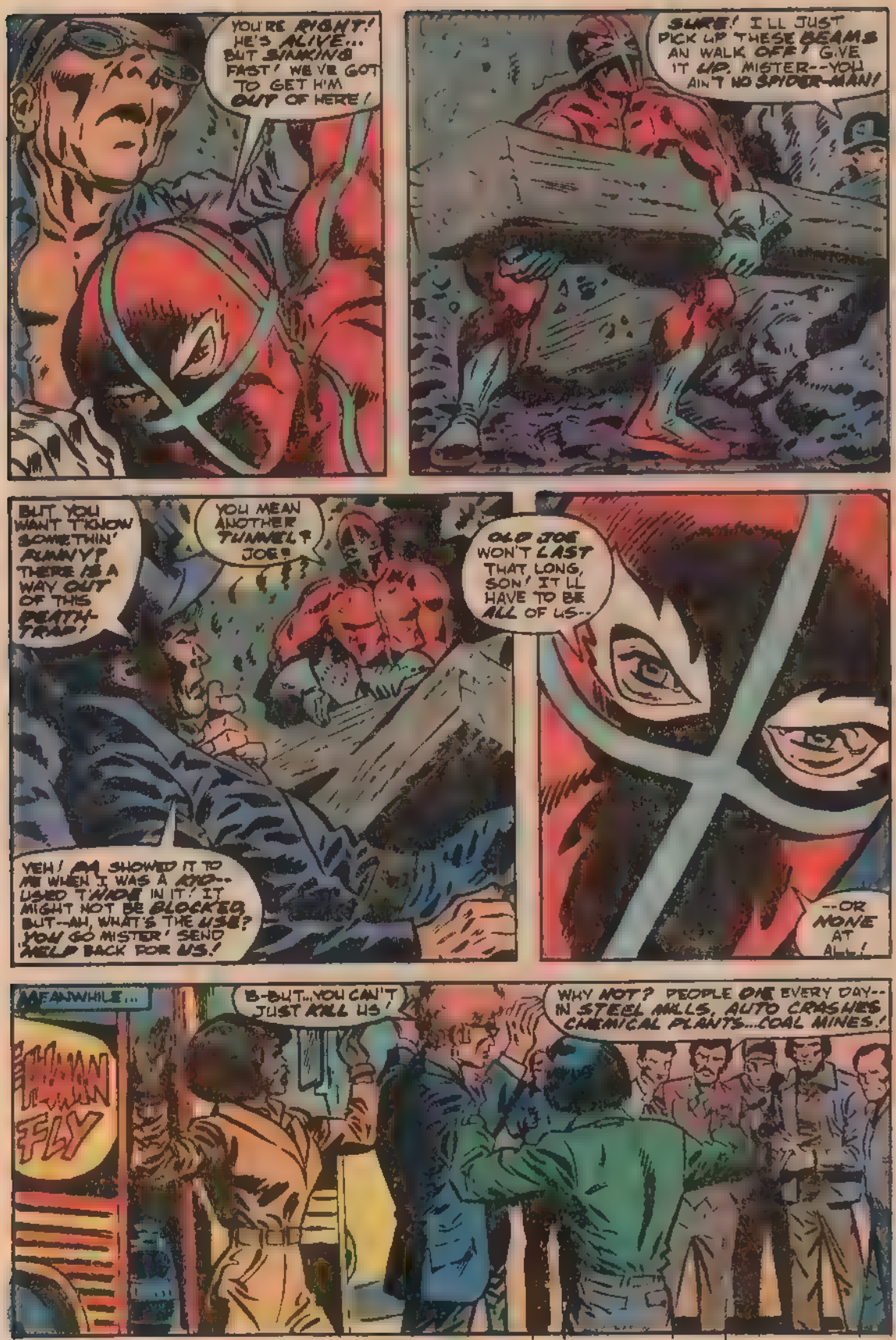
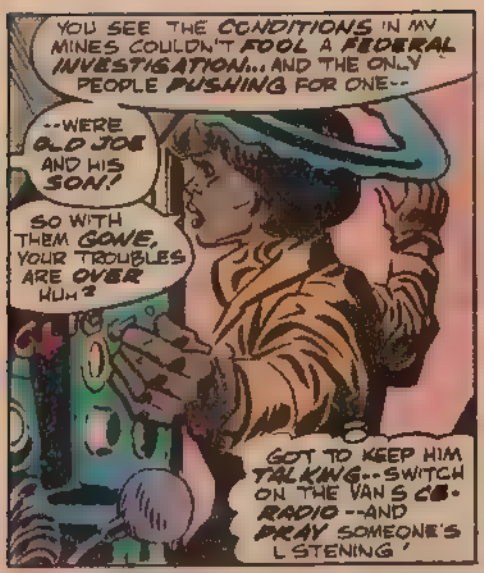
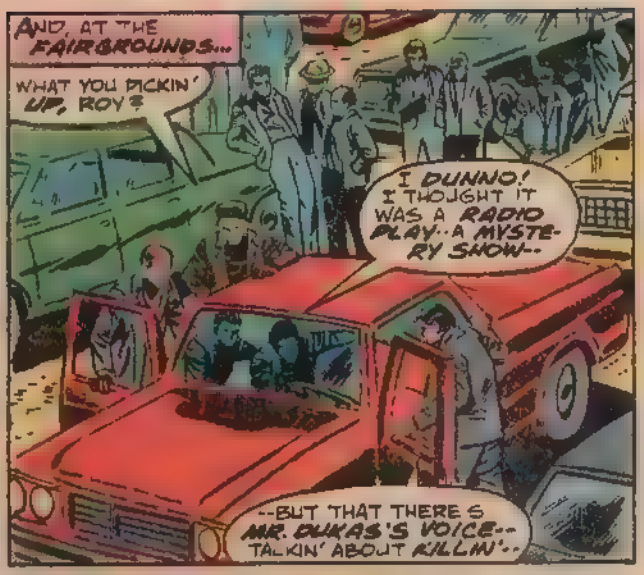
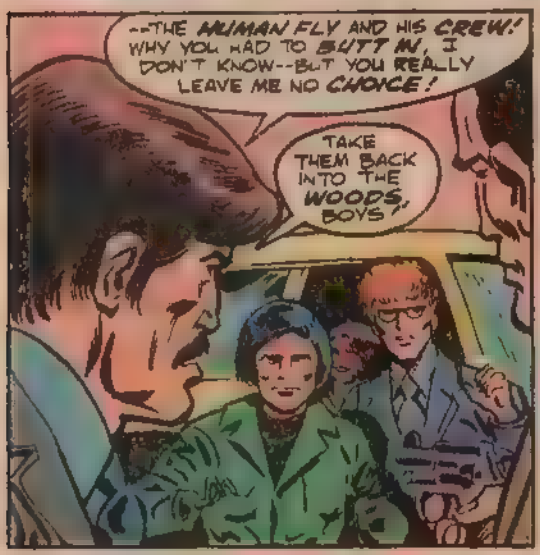
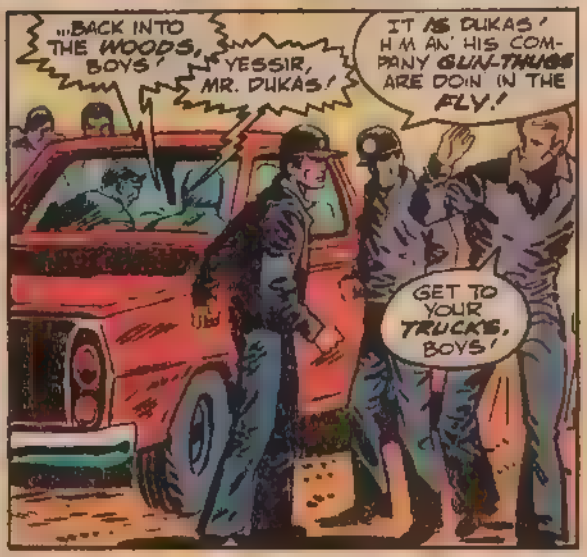
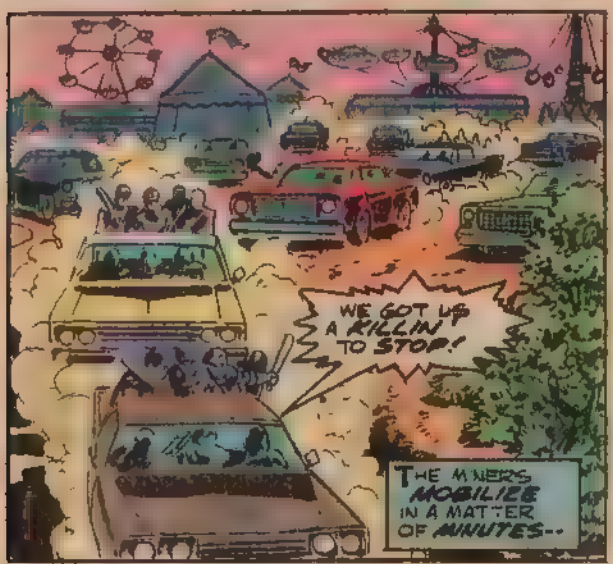

YOU'RE RIGHT! HE'S ALIVE... BUT SINKING FAST! WE'VE GOT TO GET H'M OUT OF HERE!
SURE! I'LL JUST PICK UP THESE BEAMS AN WALK OFF! GIVE IT UP, MISTER--YOU AIN'T NO SPIDER-MAN!
BUT YOU WANT T'KNOW SOMETHIN' RUNNY? THERE IS A WAY OUT OF THIS DEATH-TRAP!
YOU MEAN ANOTHER TUNNEL? JOE?
OLD JOE WON'T LAST THAT LONG, SON! IT'LL HAVE TO BE ALL OF US--
YEH! PA SHOWED IT TO ME WHEN I WAS A KID-- USED T'RIDE IN IT! IT MIGHT NOT BE BLOCKED, BUT--AH, WHAT'S THE USE? YOU GO MISTER! SEND HELP BACK FOR US!
--OR NONE AT ALL!
MEANWHILE...
THE MAN WHO CAN FLY
B-BUT...YOU CAN'T JUST KILL US!
WHY NOT? PEOPLE DIE EVERY DAY-- IN STEEL MILLS, AUTO CRASHES CHEMICAL PLANTS...COAL MINES!

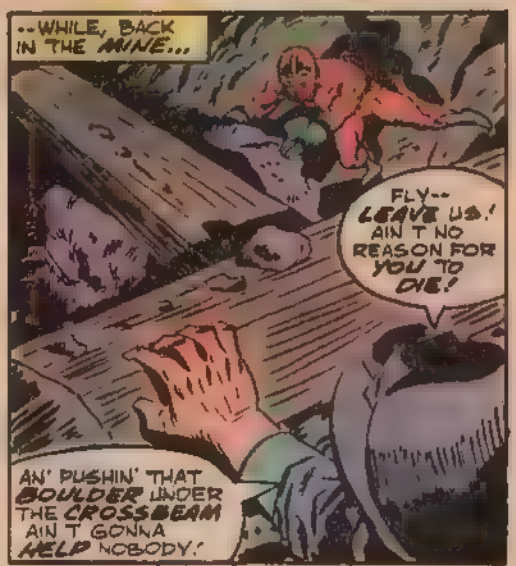

YOU SEE THE CONDITIONS IN MY MINES COULDN'T FOOL A FEDERAL INVESTIGATION... AND THE ONLY PEOPLE PUSHING FOR ONE--
--WERE OLD JOE AND HIS SON!
SO WITH THEM GONE, YOUR TROUBLES ARE OVER HUH?
GOT TO KEEP HIM TALKING--SWITCH ON THE VAN'S CB-RADIO--AND PRAY SOMEONE'S LISTENING!


AND, AT THE FAIRGROUNDS...
WHAT YOU PICKIN' UP, ROY?
I DUNNO! I THOUGHT IT WAS A RADIO PLAY..A MYSTERY SHOW--
--BUT THAT THERE'S MR. DUKAS'S VOICE--TALKIN' ABOUT KILLIN'..


--THE HUMAN FLY AND HIS CREW! WHY YOU HAD TO BUTT IN, I DON'T KNOW--BUT YOU REALLY LEAVE ME NO CHOICE!
TAKE THEM BACK INTO THE WOODS, BOYS!






--WHILE, BACK IN THE MINE...
FLY--LEAVE US! AIN'T NO REASON FOR YOU TO DIE!
AN' PUSHIN' THAT BOULDER UNDER THE CROSSBEAM AIN'T GONNA HELP NOBODY!

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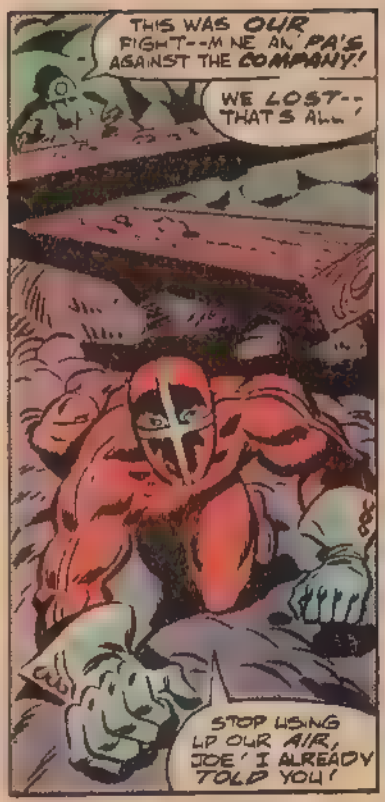
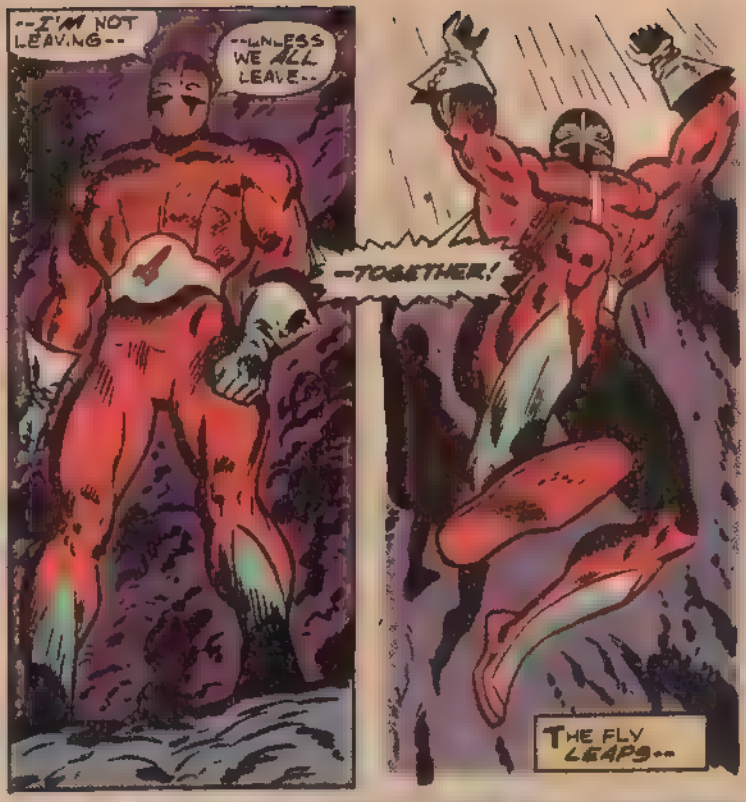
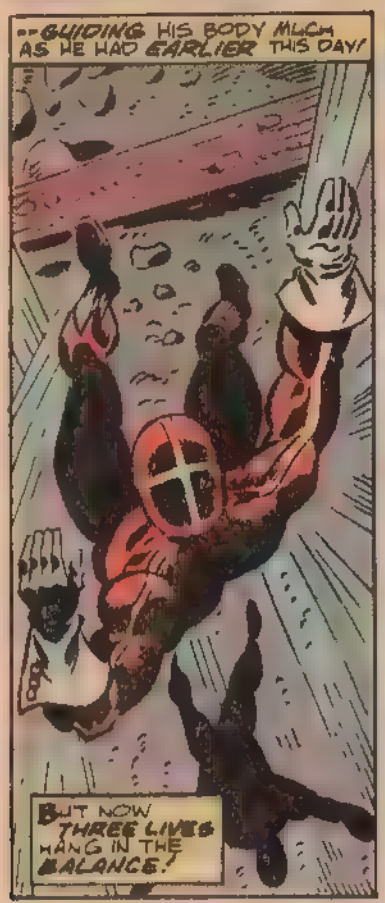
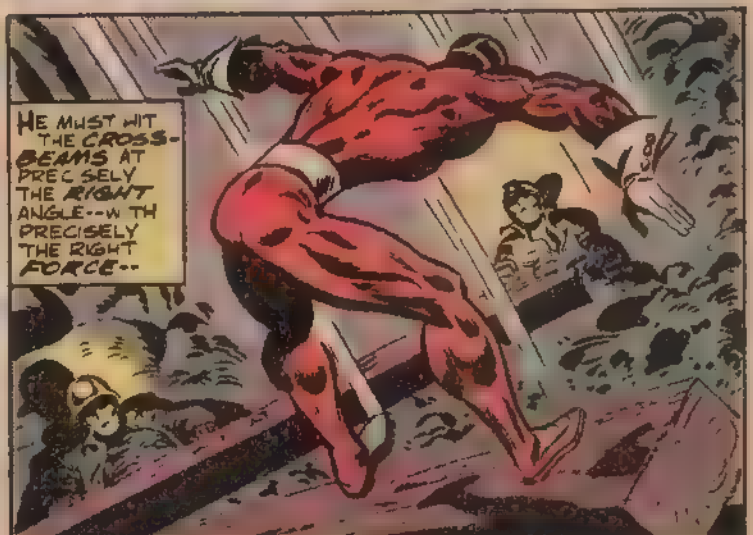
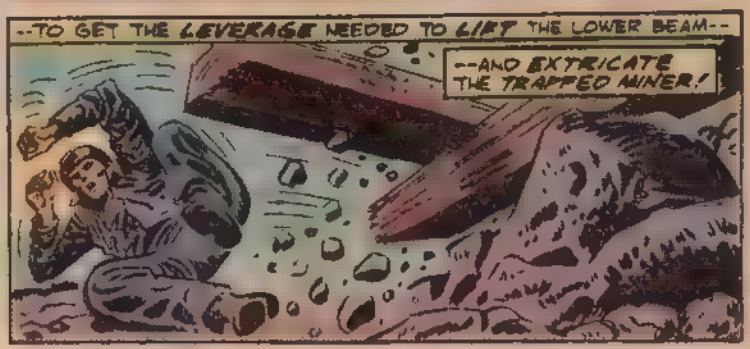

THIS WAS OUR FIGHT--MINE AN' PA'S AGAINST THE COMPANY!
WE LOST--THAT'S ALL!
STOP USING UP OUR AIR, JOE! I ALREADY TOLD YOU!


--I'M NOT LEAVING--
--UNLESS WE ALL LEAVE--
--TOGETHER!
THE FLY LEAPS--

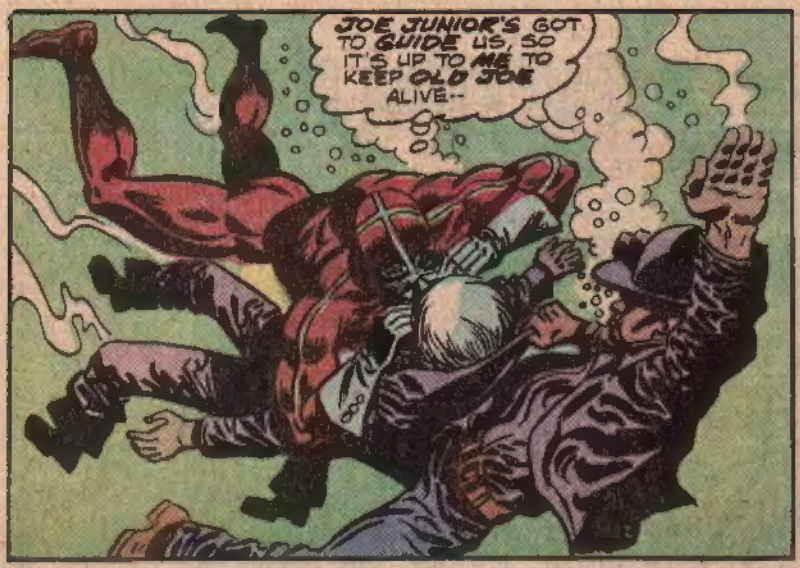

--GUIDING HIS BODY MUCH AS HE HAD EARLIER THIS DAY!
BUT NOW THREE LIVES HANG IN THE BALANCE!


HE MUST HIT THE CROSS-BEAMS AT PRECISELY THE RIGHT ANGLE--WITH PRECISELY THE RIGHT FORCE--


--TO GET THE LEVERAGE NEEDED TO LIFT THE LOWER BEAM--
--AND EXTRICATE THE TRAPPED MINER!

AAF IS HE--?
HE'S ALIVE... BARELY!
LET'S GO!
THIS WAY, THEN!
HERE! IT'S SMALL-- IT'LL BE A TIGHT FIT--
--AND YOU'LL HAVE TO PUSH PA WHILE I PULL FROM AHEAD! IT WON'T BE EASY!
BUT WE'LL MAKE IT, JOE
YEH, WELL-- MAYBE WE WILL AT THAT!
COMIN' FROM YOU, FLY, SOMEHOW I FEEL I GOTTA BELIEVE IT!
BUT
FLY! TROUBLE! TUNNEL'S FLOODED!
HOW FAR, JOE?
CAN'T BE MORE N A FEW YARDS BUT--
THEN SWIM, JOE! WE CAN'T GO BACK!
ALL RIGHT!

CONTINUED AFTER NEXT PAGE


JOE JUNIOR'S GOT TO GUIDE US, SO IT'S UP TO ME TO KEEP OLD JOE ALIVE--

--BY GIVING HIM AIR--THE ONE MORE BREATH HE'LL NEED TO MAKE IT!
NOW...IF I CAN HOLD ON...

THEN...
GASP WE-- WE MADE IT, FLY!

WE'RE OUT!!

AT THE SAME MOMENT, OUTSIDE THE MINE.
ALL RIGHT, BOYS! LET'S GET THIS OVER WITH!
ANYTHING YOU SAY, MR. DUKAS!
G-GOODBYE, TED... ARNIE!

NO NEED T'SAY YOUR GOODBYE'S, YET, LITTLE LADY!
YOU ALL ARE BEIN' RESCUED!
GET 'EM, MEN!

THE--THE MINERS! BUT HOW--
THE LADY OUTFOXED YOU, BOYS--SHE BROADCAST THE WHOLE DIRTY DEAL OVER HER CB!
YOU KILLED OLD JOE AND JOE JUNIOR, DUKAS--

SUDDENLY...
DUKAS DIDN'T KILL ANYONE, THOUGH HE DID TRY, AND HE'LL GO TO JAIL FOR THAT!
THE FLY!!
OLD JOE IS ALIVE--THE FLY SAVED US!
AN' THE BLAST OPENED UP A WHOLE NEW SEAM OF COAL!
THEN OLD JOE BEAT THE COMPANY! THE MINE STAYS OPEN--SAFELY--AN' WE GOT WORK! YAHOO!

AND, AS THE MINERS GET OLD JOE TO A HOSPITAL...
YOU'RE A HERO, FLY... AGAIN!
WE ALL ARE TEAMMATES!
EXCEPT ME! NEXT TIME I'LL LOOK BEFORE I SIT DOWN ON A DETONATOR!

WHILE MY GUITAR GENTLY WEEPS!

STAN LEE PRESENTS: MARVEL® BULLPEN BULLETINS

ARCHIE GOODWIN, Editor • JIM SHOOTER, Associate Editor • ROGER STERN, RALPH MACCHIO, JO DUFFY, JIM SALICRUP, Assistant Editors • ROY THOMAS, MARV WOLFMAN, STEVE GERBER, JACK KIRBY, Consulting Editors • JOHN ROMITA, MARIE SEVERIN, Art Directors • JOHN VERPOORTEN, Production Manager •

STAN'S SOAPBOX

It's a funny thing— not "ha ha" funny, but kind of odd— no matter what part of the country I visit, the questions asked on college campuses are pretty much the same. One querulous query I'm hit with constantly is "How come Marvel is always bringing out *new* titles when you guys have so much trouble producing the *old* ones on time?" Okay, to save you the trouble of laying it on me sometime in the future, I'll try to illuminate this burning issue here and now. Y'know, if we were just interested in doing things the easy way, we'd never change our mags. We'd just keep publishing the same titles all the time. After all, why not? They sell pretty well. We know how to do 'em. They're nice and safe and don't pose too many problems. So, how come we're always tossing new titles, new heroes, and new concepts at you? Why knock ourselves out designing an issue of CLOSE ENCOUNTERS, doing the life story of THE BEATLES, coming up with MACHINE MAN, adding SPIDER-WOMAN to our merry menage of costumed cavorters? Is it because we're never satisfied unless we have too much work to do? Is it because we're gluttons for punishment? Is it 'cause we're nuts? Probably! But mainly it's because of *you*, kiddo! You, and the limitless legions of Marveldom Assembled who bombard us with hundreds of letters a week demanding new books, new characters, and new ideas! If a few weeks go by without something unexpected and different issuing forth from the mighty Marvel fantasy factory, you accuse us of not doing right by you, of lying down on the job, or of growing soft and indolent! But it's not your fault. It's the age we live in. Look at TV— new shows cropping up all the time as old ones are dropped and reshuffled. Each month the public (and that's you and me, Charlie!) gets more and more jaded, more demanding of new products, new surprises, new types of entertainment. The whole pace of life, all over the world, seems to be speeding up. We seek more books, more movies, more games, more cars— we want more of everything, and we want it faster and faster! But fear thee not, O Faithful One! Let not a single wrinkle of apprehension furrow thy noble brow! As you can see, we're trying to give you the best of both worlds. We're keeping the world-famous Marvel line-up as intact as possible, so that you can enjoy your favorites month in and month out without interruption—while, at the same time, we've got dozens of brand new projects on the drawing board—new themes, new titles, new plans and ideas! After all, our own writers and artists are just like you! While they still enjoy the Marvel roster of the world's best-selling super-heroes, they too wanna sink their teeth into exciting new and different projects! And that's it! That's the reason for all the new stuff, even though it gives us deadline nightmares! We're doing it for you— and we're doing it for us! Some new features will succeed, and some will fall by the wayside— your guess is as good as ours. But that's what makes for excitement, and remember— excitement's the name of the game. So bear with us, hear? No matter what the future brings, we promise it won't be dull!

Excelsior!

Stan

As this column was being prepared, we were shocked by the unexpected death of John Verpoorten. He worked at Marvel for nearly twelve years, the last seven of them as our Production Manager. To those of you who read our books, his name may not be quite so familiar as those of our regular artists and writers, but among working professionals probably no one outside of Stan himself represented Marvel more. A Production Manager stands at the center of things. He oversees the flow of work as it moves from artist to writer to letterer to colorist and on to the engraver and printer, and he tries to make certain that all this happens something like on schedule. Amid the collective craziness that is the Marvel style, this can be an almost impossible task. The testimony to John is not that he did the impossible, but that he did it with warmth, with humor, and with understanding. Having started in the field as an artist— older fans will remember his inking on such strips as the FANTASTIC FOUR, the INHUMANS, and CAPTAIN AMERICA— may have left John with more tolerance and appreciation of all the many problems that can befall anyone producing comic books at any step of the way. Certainly, there are few staffers or freelancers for whom at one time or another he didn't bend a rule, make an exception, or go out on a limb. This wasn't a job requirement or any kind of a necessity, but it made Marvel a better place to work and ultimately probably made the work produced by Marvel better as well. Like most of us in comics, John sometimes got tired, and sometimes grew cynical. But never so tired that a bit of office horseplay or silliness couldn't make him smile, and not so cynical that a well-drawn page or a well-produced book wouldn't make him look with interest. Whether he was inclined to admit it or not, John cared; about comics, and about the people he knew and dealt with in producing them. And in the end, of all the things we'll miss about John, it's the caring we'll miss most.

JOHN VERPOORTEN
1940—1977

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FLY PAPERS

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As we said somewhere (probably last issue, but you know how *our* memories are) this issue of the HUMAN FLY would contain some exciting new announcements about our very *real* super-hero! First, on October 7, 1977, the Fly attempted to set a world's record by rocket-cycle leaping over 26 consecutive schoolbuses. In a comics' first, we'll be bringing you *that* story—taken from real life—right here in this mag *next month!* Secondly, also in HUMAN FLY #11, the Human Fly himself will be making a startling announcement of his own! That's right—we don't want to give it away— but the man himself will be giving you a hint about his own plans for the future on the very last page of our very next issue! Thirdly, but not least, we've actually begun work on a photo-feature to be printed here in just a few months. Not only does it feature the Fly himself, but also his assistant and those zoological wonders that inhabit the Marvel Bullpen! So stick with us, pilgrims—the very *best* is yet to come!

Dear Marvel,

HUMAN FLY #7 was superb. I think what makes a successful Fly-tale (such as #'s 5 & 7) is the human element. Lives are at stake here—children's lives. The Fly himself was born of compassion for other people, and that needs to come through (as it has so well thus far).

I hope you'll stay away from good guy versus bad guy stories like HF #6. I find them dullsville. And HF #'s 3 & 4 were a little too much for a realistic hero like the Fly. I hope you'll save those kind of stories for your super-heroes (and why *does* the cover-logo call the Fly a *super*-hero? He has no powers!)

Overall you're doing great, though. The artwork is fabulous, as are the stories and characterizations. I like Harmony's current what-to-do dilemma. I wonder how that'll develop?

Rob Fagerlund
1012 Homewild
Jackson, MI 49201

The answer to your last question forms the crux of a subplot that begins to be resolved next ish, Rob—in the midst of all the changes and mayhem of the Fly's career and adventures. As for our cover logo, in the strict sense, the Fly is *not*, as you point out, imbued of any special powers, we feel he *is* super in his incredible embodiment of the hopes of us all.

Dear Marvel,

HUMAN FLY #7 was your best issue to date. To start off, you had a beautiful cover, the story was exciting and well-paced and, to top it off, the artwork was fantastic (after looking at the way you depicted the Fly on the splash page, I almost expected it to come to life and jump right out of the comic).

There was just one thing that bothered me. On page 6, panel 5, Harmony Whyte states, and I quote, ". . .and I'll never forget how you scaled a blazing skyscraper in *Ontario* to save me and a class of handicapped children." Unquote. This is a little odd considering that the first caption in HUMAN FLY #5 (the issue referred to) describe the story as taking place in Quebec, Canada. How about a nice no-prize for spotting this error?

Keep 'em FLY-ing!

Marco Favasoli
5241 Coronation Avenue
Montreal, Quebec, CANADA H4V-2E4

Oh its way, Marco! But to explain: Bill scripted HF #6 as taking place in Ontario, then watchful Roger Stern phoned to say that he thought, there being French-speaking Canadians throughout the book, we'd be better placing the tale in Quebec. Thus, Marvel geography being mobile at best, we simply switched cities in that caption in HF #5. However, as Bill'd already penned HF #7 when the change was made, he overlooked continuing the change into that issue's flashback. Comprendez vous?

Dear Marvel,

HUMAN FLY #7 wesn't bad at all.

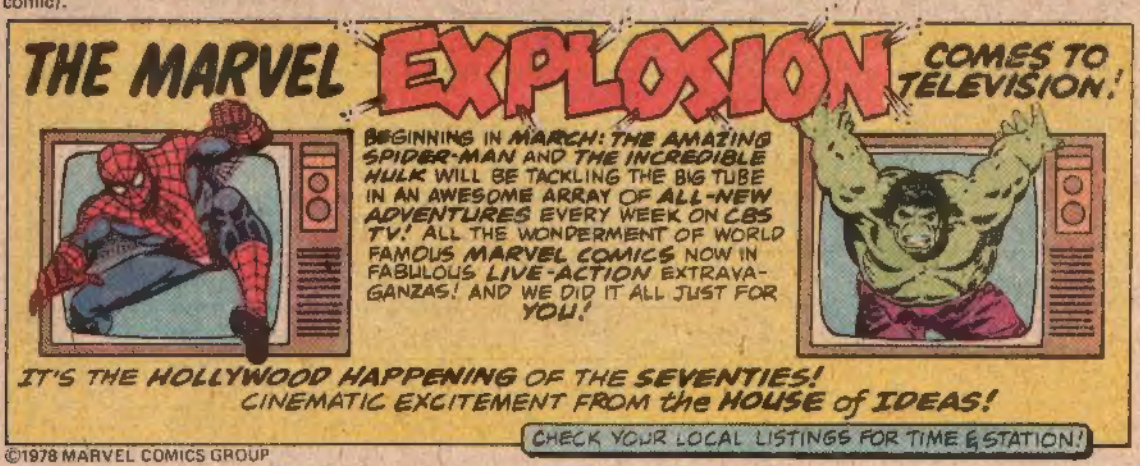
On page 15, we see Mal Evans and his son attempt to drive around a bear, thus avoiding a near-collision. When the snowmobile tips over, the bear is not more than five feet away from the helpless boy and his father. But, upon turning to page 22, we see a hungry beast at what seems to be about fifty or more feet away from them.

Do you have a fairly good explanation, or have my observations led me to believe that there is a no-prize in my future?

Please, one more question. If this letter is printed, and my observations do garner me a no-prize, will everyone with the same question or observation also receive a coveted no-prize?

John Murphy
1 Geraldine Lane
Braintree, MA 02184

Whew! What a tickler! Okay, here goes: First, it was Bill's intent, and was so plotted, that upon spotting the bear, Mal Evans would veer off and the snowmobile would slide out of control down a fairly steep and long slope. Somewhere between Lee, Mike and the colorist, the lines that indicated that great distance were obscured accidentally, and the visual-distance shortened. It's not our usual no-prize material, but, in this case, we'll make an exception. Second, no. Usually, unless it's an amazingly outright boner, no-prizes go to the *first* reader whose letter we receive. This is not always the case, though. Since we get a lot of letters all at once, and since the lettercol writer doesn't look into them all until it's time to write this page, often it's pure chance. . .and we believe that it's fairer to everyone that way.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